

SALVATION BY KNOWING THE TRUTH

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
1 Timothy 2:3, 4.*

MAY God the Holy Spirit guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved and saints stirred up to diligence. I do not intend to treat my text controversially. It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building and it looks towards a different side of the gospel from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of truth meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together and theology has such corners. It would be very easy indeed to set ourselves in battle array and during the next half-hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it and as we have very little time to spare and life is short, we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit and help us to really profit by His Word.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that He wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose, for if He did, then all men would be saved. He willed to make the world and the world was made—He does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved. Terrible as the truth is, yet is it certain from Holy Writ that there are men who, in consequence of their sin and their rejection of the Savior, will go away into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There will at the last be goats upon the left hand as well as sheep on the right, tares to be burned as well as wheat to be garnered, chaff to be blown away as well as corn to be preserved. There will be a dreadful hell as well as a glorious heaven and there is no decree to the contrary.

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I think not. You must, most of you, be acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends deal with this text. “All men,” they say—“that is, *some men*”—as if the Holy Spirit could not have said, “some men” if He had meant some men. “All men,” say they, “that is, some of all sorts of men”—as if the Lord could not have said, “all sorts of men,” if He had meant that. The Holy Spirit, by the apostle, has written “all men” and unquestionably He means all men. I know how to get rid of the force of the “alls” according to that critical method which, some time ago, was very current, but I do not see how it can be applied here with due regard to truth. I was reading just now the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away. He applies grammatical gunpowder to it and explodes it by way of expounding it. I thought when I read his exposition that it would have been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, “Who *will not* have all men to be saved, nor come to knowledge of the truth.” Had such been the inspired language, every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, “Who *will* have all men to be saved,” his observations are more than a little out of place. My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the Word of God. I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself, for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent? But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the Word of God that I should want to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any divine expression. So runs the text, and so we must read it, “God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

Does not the text mean that it is the wish of God that men should be saved? The word “wish” gives as much force to the original as it really requires and the passage should run thus—“Whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth.” As it is *my* wish that it should be so, as it is *your* wish that it might be so, so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved, for assuredly, He is not less benevolent than we are. Then comes the question, “But if He wishes it to be so, why does He not make it so?” “Beloved friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer and if that is so, I am sure a wise person like yourself can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer. Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages—“If God is infinitely good and powerful, why does not His power carry out to the full all His beneficence?” It is God’s wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God’s wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God’s wish that His creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy and yet it would be wicked to suppose that He does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that He has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by His infinite omnipotence and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell. I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the American slave who said, “Sir, you say the devil makes sin in the world.” “Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin.” “And you say that God hates sin.” “Yes.” “Then why does not He kill the devil and put an end to it?” Just so. Why does He not? Ah, my black friend, you will grow white before that question is answered. I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil; neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in heaven.

This is one of those things which we do not need to know. Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once. In the same way, there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. You will soon have I know not what of doubt and difficulty and bitterness upon your soul if you must know the unknowable and have reasons and explanations for the sublime and the mysterious. Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul by a grand exercise of confidence in God.

I thank God for a thousand things I cannot understand. When I cannot get to know the reason why, I say to myself, “Why should I know the reason why? Who am I and what am I that I should demand explanations of my God?” I am a most unreasonable being when I am most reasonable and when my judgment is most accurate, I dare not trust it. I had rather trust my God. I am a poor silly child at my very best—my Father must know better than I. An old parable maker tells us that he shut himself up in his study because he had to work out a difficult problem. His little child came knocking at the door and he said, “Go away, John—you cannot understand what Father is doing. Let Father alone.” Master Johnny, for that very reason, felt that he must get in and see what Father was doing—a true symbol of our proud intellects. We must pry into forbidden things and uncover that which is concealed. In a little while, there, upon the sill, outside the window, stood Master Johnny looking in through the window at his father, and if his father had not, with very tenderest care just taken him away from that very dangerous position, there would have been no Master Johnny left on the face of the earth to exercise his curiosity in dangerous elevations. Now, God sometimes shuts the door and says, “My child, it is so. Be content to believe.” “But,” we foolishly cry, “Lord, why is it so?” “It is so, My child,” He says. “But why, Father, is it so?” “It is so, My child, believe Me.” Then we go speculating, climbing the ladders of reasoning, guessing, speculating, to reach the lofty windows of eternal truth. Once up there we do not know where we are. Our heads reel and we are in all kinds of uncertainty and spiritual peril. If we mind things too high for us we shall run great risks. I do not intend meddling with such lofty matters. There stands the text and I believe that it is my Father’s wish that “all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” But I know, also, that He does not will it, so that He will not save any one of them unless they believe in His dear Son, for He has told us over and over that He will not. He will not save any man unless he forsakes his sins and turns to Him with full purpose of heart—that I also know.

And I know, also, that He has a people whom He will save, whom by His eternal love He has chosen and whom, by His eternal power, He will deliver. I do not know how that squares with this—that is another of the things I do not know. If I go on telling you of all that I do not know and of all that I do know, I will warrant you that the things that I do not know will be a hundred to one of the things that I do know. And so we will say no more about the matter, but just go on to the more practical part of the text. God's wish about man's salvation is this—that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Men are saved and the same men that are saved come to knowledge of the truth. The two things happen together and the two facts very much depend upon each other. God's way of saving men is not by leaving them in ignorance. It is by *knowledge of the truth that men are saved*. This will make up the main body of our discourse and in closing, we shall see how this truth *gives instruction to those who wish to be saved and also to those who desire to save others*. May the Holy Spirit make these closing inferences to be practically useful.

Here is our proposition—IT IS BY KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH THAT MEN ARE SAVED. Observe that stress is laid upon the article—it is *the* truth and not every truth. Though it is a good thing to know the truth about anything and we ought not to be satisfied to take up with a falsehood upon any point, yet it is not every truth that will save us. We are not saved by knowing any one theological truth we may choose to think of, for there are some theological truths which are comparatively of inferior value. They are not vital or essential, and a man may know them and yet may not be saved. It is *the* truth which saves. Jesus Christ is *the* truth. The whole testimony of God about Christ is *the* truth. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is to work in us *the* truth. The knowledge of the truth is a large knowledge. It is not always so at the first. It may begin with but a little knowledge, but it is a large knowledge when it is further developed and the soul is fully instructed in the whole range of the truth.

This knowledge of the grand facts which are here called the truth saves men and we will notice its mode of operation. Very often it begins its work in a man by awakening him and thus it *saves him from carelessness*. He did not know anything about the truth which God has revealed and so he lived like a brute beast. If he had enough to eat and to drink, he was satisfied. If he laid by a little money he was delighted. So long as the days passed pretty merrily and he was free from aches and pains, he was satisfied. He heard about religion, but he thought it did not concern him. He supposed that there were some people who might be the better for thinking about it, but as far as he was concerned, he thought no more about God or godliness than the ox of the stall or the ostrich of the desert. Well, the truth came to him and he received knowledge of it. He knew only a part and that a very dark and gloomy part of it, but it stirred him out of his carelessness, for he suddenly discovered that he was under the wrath of God. Perhaps he heard a sermon or read a tract, or had a practical word addressed to him by some Christian friend and he found out enough to know that, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." That startled him. "God is angry with the wicked every day"—that amazed him. He had not thought of it, perhaps had not known it, but when he did know it, he could rest no longer. Then he came to knowledge of this farther truth, that after death there would be a judgment, that he would rise again and that, being risen, he would have to stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of the things which he had done in his body. This came home very strikingly to him. Perhaps, also, such a text as this flamed forth before him, "For every idle word that man shall speak he must give an account in the day of judgment." His mind began to foresee that last tremendous day when on the clouds of heaven Christ will come and summon the quick and the dead to answer at His judgment seat for the whole of their lives. He did not know that before, but knowing it, it startled and awakened him. I have known men, when first they have come to knowledge of this truth, become unable to sleep. They have started up in the night. They have asked those who were with them to help them to pray. The next day they have been scarcely able to mind their business, for a dreadful sound has been in their ears. They feared lest they should stumble into the grave and into hell. Thus they were saved from carelessness. They could not go back to be the mere brute beasts they were before. Their eyes had been opened to futurity and eternity. Their spirits had been quickened—at least so much that they could not rest in that doltish, dull, dead carelessness in which they had formerly been found. They were shaken out of their deadly lethargy by knowledge of the truth.

The truth is useful to a man in another way—it *saves him from prejudice*. Often when men are awakened to know something about the wrath of God they begin to plunge about to discover methods by which they may escape from that wrath. Consulting, first of all, with themselves, they think that if they can reform—give up their grosser sins—and if they can join with religious people, they will make it all right. And there are some who go and listen to a kind of religious teacher who says, “You must do good works. You must earn a good character. You must add to all this the ceremonies of our church. You must be particular and precise in receiving blessings only through the appointed channel of the apostolic succession.” Of the aforesaid mystical succession, this teacher has the effrontery to assure his dupe that he is a legitimate instrument and that sacraments received at his hands are means of grace. Under such untruthful notions we have known people who were somewhat awakened, sit down again in a false peace. They have done all that they judged right and attended to all that they were told. Suddenly, by God’s grace, they come to knowledge of another truth and that is that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. They discover that salvation is not by works of the law or by ceremonies and that if any man is under the law, he is also under the curse. Such a text as the following comes home, “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” and such another text as this, “You must be born-again.” And then this at the back of it, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When they also find out that there is necessary a righteousness better than their own—a perfect righteousness to justify them before God—and when they discover that they must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus or else they will utterly perish, then they are saved from false confidences, saved from crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. It is a grand thing when knowledge of the truth stops us from trusting in a lie. I am addressing some who remember when they were saved in that way. What an opening of the eyes it was to you! You had a great prejudice against the gospel of grace and the plan of salvation by faith, but when the Lord took you in hand and made you see your beautiful righteousness to be a moth-eaten mass of rags and when the gold that you had accumulated suddenly turned into so much brass, cankered, and good for nothing—when you stood stripped naked before God and the poor cobwebs of ceremonies suddenly dropped from off you, oh, then the Lord was working His salvation in your soul and you were being saved from false confidences by a knowledge of the truth.

Moreover, it often happens that knowledge of the truth stands a man in good stead for another purpose—it *saves him from despair*. Unable to be careless and unable to find comfort in false confidences, some poor agitated minds are driven into a wide and stormy sea without rudder or compass, with nothing but wreck before them. “There is no hope for me,” says the man. “I perceive I cannot save myself. I see that I am lost. I am dead in trespasses and sins and cannot stir hand or foot. Surely, I may as well go on in sin and even multiply my transgressions. The gate of mercy is shut against me—what is the use of fear where there is no room for hope?” At such a time, if the Lord leads the man to knowledge of the truth, he perceives that though his sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool, and though they are red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow. That precious doctrine of substitution comes in—that Christ stood in the stead of the sinner; that the transgression of His people was laid upon Him and that God, by thus avenging sin in the person of His dear Son and honoring His law by the suffering of the Savior, is now able to declare pardon to the penitent and grace to the believing. Now, when the soul comes to know that sin is put away by the atoning blood—when the heart discovers that it is not our life that saves us, but the life of God that comes to dwell in us—that we are not to be regenerated by our own actions, but are regenerated by the Holy Spirit who comes to us through the precious death of Jesus, then despair flies away and the soul cries exultingly, “There is hope. There is hope. Christ died for sinners—why should I not have a part in that precious death? He came like a physician to heal the sick—why should He not heal me? Now I perceive that He does not want my goodness, but my badness. He does not need my righteousness, but my unrighteousness, for He came to save the ungodly and to redeem His people from their sins.” I say, when the heart comes to knowledge of this truth, then it is saved from despair and this is no small part of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

A saving knowledge of the truth, to take another line of things, works in this way. Knowledge of the truth shows a man his personal need of being saved. O you that are not saved and who dream you do not

need to be, you only require to know the truth and you will perceive that you must be saved or lost forever.

Knowledge of the truth *reveals the atonement by which we are saved*. Knowledge of the truth *shows us what that faith is by which the atonement becomes available for us*. Knowledge of the truth teaches us that faith is the simple act of trusting, that it is not an action of which man may boast—it is not an action of the nature of a work, so as to be a fruit of the law, but faith is a self-denying grace which finds all its strength in Him upon whom it lives and lays all its honor upon Him. Faith is not self in action but self forsaken, self abhorred, self put away that the soul may trust in Christ and trust in Christ alone. There are persons now present who are puzzled about what faith is. We have tried to explain it a great many times to you, but we have explained it so that you did not understand it any the better, and yet the same explanation has savingly instructed others. May God the Holy Spirit open your understandings that you may practically know what faith is and at once exercise it. I suppose that it is a very hard thing to understand because it is so plain. When a man wishes the way of salvation to be difficult, he naturally kicks at it because it is easy. And, when his pride wants it to be hard to be understood, he is pretty sure to say that he does not understand it because it is so plain. Don't you know that the unlettered often receive Christ when philosophers refuse Him and that He who has not called many of the great and many of the mighty, has chosen poor, foolish, and despised things? That is because poor foolish men, you know, are willing to believe a plain thing, but men wise in their own conceits desire to be, if they can, a little confounded and puzzled that they may please themselves with the idea that their own superior intellect has made a discovery and because the way of salvation is just so easy that almost an idiot boy may lay hold of it, therefore they pretend that they do not understand it. Some people cannot see a thing because it is too high up, but there are others who cannot see it because it is too low down. Now, it so happens that the way of salvation by faith is so simple that it seems beneath the dignity of exceedingly clever men. May God bring them to knowledge of this truth. May they see that they cannot be saved except by giving up all idea of saving themselves, that they cannot be saved except they step right into Christ, for, until they get to the end of the creature, they will never get to the beginning of the Creator. Till they empty out their pockets of every moldy crust and have not a crumb left, they cannot come and take the rich mercy which is stored up in Christ Jesus for every empty, needy sinner. May the Lord be pleased to give you that knowledge of the truth!

When a man comes in very deed to a knowledge of the truth about faith in Christ, he trusts Christ and he is then and there saved from the guilt of sin and he begins to be saved altogether from sin. God cuts the root of the power of sin that very day, but yet it has such life within itself that at the scent of water it will bud again. Sin in our members struggles to live. It has as many lives as a cat—there is no killing it. Now, when we come to a knowledge of the truth, we begin to learn how sin is to be killed in us—how the same Christ that justifies, sanctifies, and works in us according to His working—works in us mightily that we may be conformed to His image and made meet to dwell with perfect saints above.

Beloved, many of you that are saved from the guilt of sin have a very hard struggle with the power of sin and have much more conflict, perhaps, than you need to have, because you have not come to knowledge of all the truth about indwelling sin. I therefore beg you to study much the Word of God upon that point and especially to see the adaptation of Christ to rule over your nature and to conquer all your corrupt desires, and learn how by faith to bring each sin before Him that, like Agag, it may be hewed in pieces before His eyes. You will never overcome sin except by the blood of the Lamb. There is no sanctification except by faith. The same instrument which destroys sin as to its guilt must slay sin as to its power. “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb,” and so must you. Learn this truth well, so shall you find salvation worked in you from day to day.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, “I think I know all about this.” Yes, you may think you know it and may not know anything at all about it. “Oh, but,” says one, “I do know it. I learned the ‘Assembly’s Catechism’ when I was a child. I have read the Bible ever since and I am well acquainted with all the commonplaces of orthodoxy.” That may be, dear friend, and yet you may not know the truth. I have heard of a man who knew how to swim, but as he had never been in the water, I do not think much of his knowledge of swimming. In fact, he did not really know the art. I have heard of a botanist who understood all about flowers, but as he lived in London and scarcely ever saw above one poor withered thing

in a flowerpot, I do not think much of his botany. I have heard of a man who was a very great astronomer, but he had not a telescope and I never thought much of his astronomy. So there are many persons who think they know and yet do not know because they have never had any personal acquaintance with the thing. A mere notional knowledge or a dry doctrinal knowledge is of no avail. We must know the truth in a very different way from that.

How are we to know it, then? Well, we are to know it, first, by *a believing knowledge*. You do not know a thing unless you believe it to be really so. If you doubt it, you do not know it. If you say, "I really am not sure it is true," then you cannot say that you know it. That which the Lord has revealed in Holy Scripture you must devoutly believe to be true. In addition to this, your knowledge, if it becomes believing knowledge, must be *personal knowledge*—a persuasion that it is true in reference to yourself. It is true about your neighbor, about your brother, but you must believe it about *yourself* or your knowledge is vain. For instance, you must know that *you* are lost—that *you* are in danger of eternal exclusion from the presence of God, that for *you* there is no hope but in Christ, that for *you* there is hope if *you* rest in Christ—that resting in Christ *you* are saved. Yes, *you*. You must know that because you have trusted in Christ you are saved and that now *you* are free from condemnation and that now in *you* the new life has begun, which will fight against the old life of sin until it overcome, and you, even you, are safely landed on the golden shore. There must be a personal appropriation of what you believe to be true. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul.

But this must be *a powerful knowledge*, by which I mean that it must operate in and upon your mind. A man is told that his house is on fire. I will suppose that standing here, I held up a *telegram* and said, "My friend, is your name so-and-so?" "Yes." "Well, your house is on fire." He knows the fact, does he not? Yes, but he sits quite still. Now, my impression is about that good brother that he does not know, for he does not believe it. He cannot believe it. Surely he may believe that somebody's house is on fire, but not his own. If it is his house which is burning and he knows it, what does he do? Why he gets up and goes off to see what he can do towards saving his goods. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul—when a man knows the truth about himself and therefore his whole nature is moved and affected by the knowledge. Do I know that I am in danger of hell fire? And am I in my senses? Then I shall never rest till I have escaped from that danger. Do I know that there is salvation for me in Christ? Then I never shall be content until I have obtained that salvation by the faith to which that salvation is promised—that is to say, if I really am in my senses and if my sin has not made me beside myself as sin does, for sin works a moral madness upon the mind of man so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter and dances on the jaws of hell and sits down and scoffs at Almighty mercy, despises the precious blood of Christ and will have none of it, although then and there only is his salvation to be found.

This knowledge, when it really comes to save the soul, is what we call *experimental knowledge*—knowledge acquired according to the exhortation of the psalmist, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good"—acquired by tasting. Now, at this present moment, I, speaking for myself, know that I am originally lost by nature. Do I believe it? Believe it? I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence. I know that I am lost by nature. It would not be possible for anybody to make me doubt that. I have felt it. How many weary days I spent under the pressure of that knowledge! Does a soldier know that there is such a thing as a cat when he has had a hundred lashes? It would take a deal of argument to make him believe there is not such a thing or that backs do not smart when they feel the lash. Oh, how my soul smarted under the lash of conscience when I suffered under a sense of sin! Do I know that I couldn't save myself? Know it? Why, my poor, struggling heart labored this way and that, even as in the very fire with bitter disappointment, for I labored to climb to the stars on a tread wheel and I was trying and trying and trying with all my might, but never rose an inch higher. I tried to fill a bottomless tub with leaking buckets and worked on and toiled and slaved, but never accomplished even the beginning of my unhappy task. I know, for I have tried it, that salvation is not in man or in all the feelings, and weepings, and prayings, and Bible readings, and church goings, and chapel goings which zeal could crowd together. Nothing whatsoever that man does can avail him towards his own salvation. This I know by sad trial of it and failure in it.

But I do know that there is real salvation by believing in Christ. Know it? I have never preached to you concerning that subject what I do not know by experience. In a moment, when I believed in Christ, I

leaped from despair to fullness of delight. Since I have believed in Jesus, I have found myself totally new—changed altogether from what I was and I find now that in proportion as I trust in Jesus, I love God and try to serve Him, but if at any time I begin to trust in myself, I forget my God and I become selfish and sinful. Just as I keep on being nothing and taking Christ to be everything, so am I led in the paths of righteousness. I am merely talking of myself, because a man cannot bear witness about other people so thoroughly as he can about himself. I am sure that all of you who have tried my Master can bear the same witness. You have been saved and you have come to a knowledge of the truth experimentally, and every soul here that would be saved must in the same way believe the truth, appropriate the truth, act upon the truth, and experimentally know the truth, which is summed up in few words—“Man lost—Christ His Savior. Man nothing—God all in all. The heart depraved—the Spirit working the new life by faith.” The Lord grant that these truths may come home to your hearts with power.

I am now going to draw two inferences which are to be practical. The first one is this—in regard TO YOU THAT ARE SEEKING SALVATION. Does not the text show you that it is very possible that the reason why you have not found salvation is because you do not know the truth? Hence, I do most earnestly entreat the many of you young people, who cannot get rest, to be very diligent searchers of your Bibles. The first thing and the main thing is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you say, “I do not understand it,” or “I cannot believe,” or if there is any such doubt rising in your mind, then it may be because you have not gained complete knowledge of the truth. It is very possible that somebody will say to you, “Believe, believe, believe.” I would say the same to you, but I should like you to act upon the commonsense principle of knowing what is to be believed and in whom you are to believe. I explained this to one who came to me a few evenings ago. She said that she could not believe. “Well,” I said, “now suppose, as you sit in that chair, I say to you, ‘Young friend, I cannot believe in you.’ You would say to me, ‘I think you should.’ Suppose I then replied, ‘I wish I could.’ What would you bid me do? Should I sit still and look at you till I said, ‘I think I can believe in you’? That would be ridiculous. No, I should go and inquire, ‘Who is this young person? What kind of character does she bear? What are her connections?’ And when I knew all about you, then I have no doubt that I would say, ‘I have made examination into this young woman’s character and I cannot help believing her.’” Now, it is just so with Jesus Christ. If you say, “I cannot believe in Him,” read those four blessed testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and especially linger much over those parts where they tell you of His death. Do you know that many, while they have been sitting, as it were, at the foot of the cross viewing the Son of God dying for men, have cried out, “I cannot help believing. I cannot help believing. When I see my sin, it seems too great, but when I see my Savior, my iniquity vanishes away”? I think I have put it to you sometimes like this—if you take a ride through London, from end to end, it will take you many days to get an idea of its vastness, for probably none of us know the size of London. After your long ride of inspection you will say, “I wonder how those people can all be fed. I cannot make it out. Where does all the bread come from and all the butter and all the cheese and all the meat and everything else? Why, these people will be starved. It is not possible that Lebanon with all its beasts and the vast plains of Europe and America should ever supply sufficient food for all this multitude.” That is your feeling. And then, tomorrow morning you get up and you go to Covent Garden. You go to the great meat markets and to other sources of supply and when you come home you say, “I feel quite different now, for now I cannot make out where all the people will come from to eat all this provision—I never saw so much food in all my life. Why, if there were two Londons, surely there is enough here to feed them.” Just so—when you think about your sins and your wants, you get to saying, “How can I be saved?” Now, turn your thoughts the other way. Think that Christ is the Son of God. Think of what the merit must be of the incarnate God’s bearing human guilt, and instead of saying, “My sin is too great,” you will almost think the atoning sacrifice too great. Therefore I do urge you to try and know more of Christ and I am only giving you the advice of Isaiah, “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live.” Know, hear, read, and believe more about these precious things, always with this wish—“I am not hearing for hearing’s sake and I am not wishing to know for knowing’s sake, but I am wanting to hear and to know that I may be saved.” I want you to be like the woman that lost her piece of silver. She did not light a candle and then say, “Bravo, I have lit a candle, this is enough.” She did not take her broom and then sit down content, crying, “What a splendid broom.” When she raised a dust she did not exclaim, “What a dust I

am making! I am surely making progress now.” Some poor sinners, when they have been seeking, get into a dust of soul-trouble and think it to be a comfortable sign. No, I’ll warrant you, the woman wanted her coin—she did not mind the broom, or the dust, or the candle—she looked for the silver. So it must be with you. Never content yourself with the reading, the hearing, or the feeling. It is Christ you want. It is the precious piece of money that you must find and you must sweep until you find it. Why, there it is! There is Jesus! Take Him! Take Him! Believe Him now, even now, and you are saved.

The last inference is for YOU WHO DESIRE TO SAVE SINNERS. You must, dear friends, bring *the truth* before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost anything is to be tolerated that wakes them up, but for real solid soul-work before God, telling men the truth is the main thing. What truth? It is gospel truth—truth about Christ that they want. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate way, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the truth. He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the truth before them. That is God’s way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, “Let me call your attention to this passage.” It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book itself. Say, “Did you notice this promise, my dear friend? And have you seen that passage?” Have the Scriptures handy. There is a dear brother of mine here whom God blesses to many souls and I have seen him talking to some and turning to the texts very handily. I wondered how he did it so quickly, till I looked in his Bible and found that he had the choice texts printed on two leaves and inserted into the Book so that he could always open upon them. That is a capital plan, to get the cheering words ready to hand, the very ones that you know have comforted you and have comforted others. It sometimes happens that one single verse of God’s Word will make the light to break into a soul when fifty days of reasoning would not do it. I notice that when souls are saved, it is by our texts rather than by our sermons. God the Holy Spirit loves to use His own sword. It is God’s Word, not man’s comment on God’s Word that God usually blesses. Therefore, stick to the quotation of the Scripture itself and rely upon *the truth*. If a man could be saved by a lie, it would be a lying salvation. Truth alone can work results that are true. Therefore, keep on teaching *the truth*. God help you to proclaim the precious truth about the bleeding, dying, risen, exalted, coming Savior and God will bless it.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Accept again my heartiest salutations. I hope soon to issue sermons preached at home on the previous Sabbaths, for I purpose, if the Lord will, to leave this shelter on February 2 or thereabouts. Six weeks of continuous fine weather have, by God’s blessing, delivered me from my pains and enabled me to regain a large measure of strength. And the daily good tidings from home have also helped to quiet my mind and revive my spirit. O that I may be the better for this affliction. As after heavy showers the fountains and brooks run with new force and fullness, so may it be with these sermons now that with me “the rain is over and gone.” If you, dear readers, are the more refreshed I shall count pain and weakness to be a small cost for so blessed a result.

Yours most heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, January 16, 1880

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